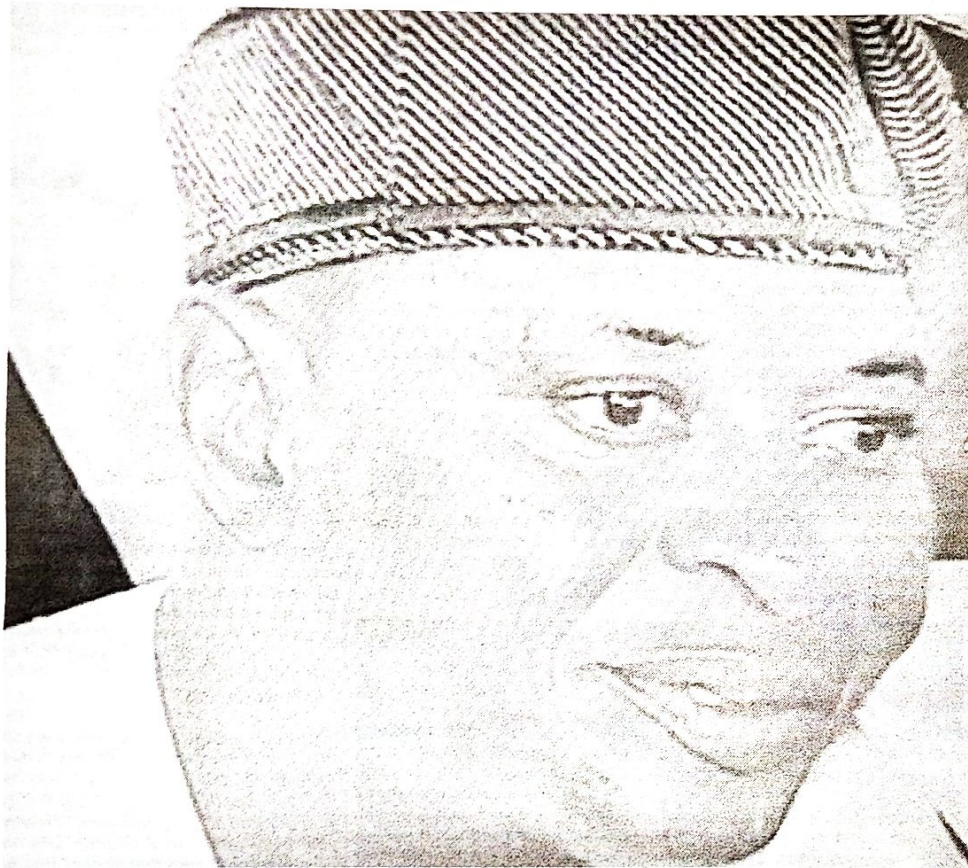


## Interview

# 'Because the torture was too much, our friend told his kidnappers to kill him'

Olabiye Olabode is a friend of late Engineer Ayodele Alabi, who was kidnapped and died a day after his release by his abductors in Kwara state. Mr. Olabode spoke with BIOLA AZEEZ. Excerpts:



When he was released, as you know, the exchange took place around 10:30 pm. The person that went to pick him up had to ferry him on a motorbike through the bush up to Omu Aran. Of course, it would be difficult traveling to Ilorin where we could possibly get a better medical attention. So, he was taken to one of the hospitals in Osi. In the morning, the doctor actually said that his condition was dire and bad and advised that he should be taken to a better equipped hospital, a general hospital. We had to wait looking for ambulance and all that. Eventually, we took him to Ilorin. Against the background of the charge by the doctor, he couldn't be taken to any teaching or general hospital because of the ongoing strike action by doctors. He was taken to a private hospital. They did their best. At a point he opened his eyes. And a little around 4:00 am he gave up. But you see, when you look at him, his body, you see how much he had been tortured, like using sides of cutlass to beat someone. One of his finger nails and toes removed, his ribs broken.

## Was he actually diabetic?

Yes, he was diabetic and had high blood pressure. He was permanently on medication. He's such a person who's so meticulous about his things. He didn't miss the time of his medication.

## Please, tell us your level of friendship with the late Engineer Alabi.

We met in Kano in the 80s. We were so close that we're not just friends but brothers. He was always there for, not just me, but for everybody. People knew him as a peaceful and friendly person. He's always having his smile on his face. He's always ready to help. In short, he's a person that'll be missed dearly. We were always going from Kano to Ilorin together. Doing things together. From Kano, he was posted to Jigawa, Kwara and Abuja, where he retired. He retired two years ago.

## What's your impression of the law enforcement agencies on the abduction saga?

In as much as we were pained about the death of our brother, the police are not well equipped. Government is not supporting the police the way it should. You can imagine police not having tracking equipment. The only one they have is in Abuja and it's not working. What should be in each police formation or at least, each police headquarters. It could be anybody tomorrow. Police are willing to work, but they'll tell you they don't have the resources. No vehicle, logistics and they are human too. Our friend was a victim of circumstance. He was not targeted. There were some others kidnapped too. He was travelling on a highway, driving his Toyota Camry muscle. He was stopped.

The police was duly informed and their aloofness and that of Kwara State government all through the harrowing experience smacked of callousness and decadence in our sociopolitical superstructure.

Worse still the Police and Kwara State government that knew nothing about the ransom and rescue went to town to claim victory for the release on radio and television.

The scourge of kidnapping is real and a present danger. It is when you are affected that you will realize that it is like a film coming to a cinema near you.

We are living in dangerous and perilous times and the government is nonexistent and totally unresponsive and irresponsible.

## What's your take on the current security situation in the country?

First, the economic situation has made us lose our humanity. When something like this started, and the government didn't curb it at the initial stage, then it was bound to spread. It has now spread so much across tribes. We were talking that it's Fulani. Now it has become an enterprise. Every tribe and every unemployed is involved. Even when the employed people see that people pay up like N5 million or more like that for a day's job and no one is checking them, they join.

**P**LEASE tell us what family, friends went through during the ordeal.

When we got the news of his abduction on Saturday, August 7, 2021, we didn't hear anything from the kidnappers. He was abducted between Oke Onigbin and Omu-Aran in Kwara state.

When I say we, I mean family, friends and groups. He was kidnapped along with his elder brother and three others. In the course of the gruesome trekking in the bush his brother fell out of exhaustion and was left behind. He brought the news of the incident to town.

Of course, we reported the matter in Omu Aran. There the police officers said we should report it at Oke Onigbin. They said that it's under that jurisdiction. We didn't hear anything from the kidnappers until the following day, which was a Sunday. That's when they made a demand of N30 million. We informed the police about the demand and more or less we were not getting any feedback. Subsequently, there was negotiation back and forth. We told them he's a retiree and that if they'd asked for N2 million we'd have to scout around before we can raise it. They said we were not ready. They collected N4 million. In short, along the line in the course of negotiation, they'd give him the phone to talk with us and he would be pleading frantically that we should just look for money anyhow and just settle the guys and that the torture was just too much, the experience was so harrowing, and that he could not bear it any longer. You know, he was not the only person that was abducted. They were about nine. At times, the kidnappers would give phone to one of the other victims in their custody. There was a lady in particular, who was even pleading with us that, "E jowo. Ara daddy o ya nibi bayi E tete se nkan ti e ba le se". There was one other person again, who was being tortured like our friend. That one ended in the hospital too. He said he and our friend,

at a point, just told the kidnappers to kill them because the torture was just too much. He said that they would respond that "we would not kill you, it's money we want". You know, the kidnappers speak English, Hausa and everything. So, to disabuse people's mind they're not Fulani. Their tribe is either Benue or Kogi.

## How old was he?

Engineer Alabi was 64 years of age and he retired from federal ministry of works.

## What actually led to his death a day after his release?



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